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# ENG 3804-001

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*Eastern Illinois University*

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English 3804 - Milton  
Fall 2006

Prof. Dana Ringuette  
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Office hours:

Tuesday & Thursday 10:45 - 12:00 noon  
and by appointment

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We'll read and study together the poetry and prose of John Milton, from early poetry to later, from early prose works to later. We'll spend some extra time on *Paradise Lost*. In all of our study, we'll try to place Milton within his time, to comprehend his understanding of the importance of the poet and poetry, and to recognize the value his work has for us today.

#### Required Text:

- *The Riverside Milton*. Edited by Roy Flannagan

#### Recommended Texts:

These books are recommended because they are reference works that will help you with Milton's work and with subsequent courses as well. In addition, a good dictionary is *essential*.

- *The King James Bible*. Perhaps you already own one. The reason for recommending this version in particular is that it is the standard reference for literature written in English. Available in the Reference section in Booth Library (actually in any library).
- Edith Hamilton, *Mythology*. A great resource for help in identifying mythological references that run throughout Milton's poetry (and, for that matter, throughout English and American literature in general). Available in Booth Library.
- A good handbook of literary terms. Many are available (again, also in Booth Library), but look for one that has been edited and published within the past five to ten years. Examples: X. J. Kennedy, et. al.: *Handbook of Literary Terms: Literature, Language, Theory*; William Harmon and Hugh Holman: *A Handbook to Literature*; Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray: *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*.
- A newspaper or other reputable, published news source (sorry, the *DEN* doesn't count). I recommend the *free* online subscription to *The New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com>).

## Course Requirements:

**Lectures and Discussions:** I hope to lecture comparatively few times over the course of the semester. Most will occur at the beginning of the semester, and subsequent ones will be brief. Most of the time, however, we'll be discussing and exchanging ideas on Milton's work. Part of my point here, too, is that you have very little chance of succeeding in this course if you do not attend class.

**Independent Reading and Discussion Groups:** In addition to work in class, each student is to join a reading and discussion group, for the purpose of discussing on your own, and among yourselves, Milton's poetry and prose, the lectures and class discussions, and any topics that seem important to you to discuss. Talk about whatever you want: I won't be monitoring or leading the groups. At the end of the semester, however, each reading group must submit a brief account of the group's activities over the course of the semester.

**Commentaries:** Over the semester, you will write three commentaries on passages from Milton in which you will be required to identify, locate, and write a brief commentary on what the passage says, why it is important, or what it means or implies. These will be take-home assignments, open-book, and, if you work it right, they can grow out of your work in class and in your reading and discussion group. More instructions will follow.

**Papers:** Two short essays are required (roughly 5-7 pages each). Papers should be explorations and analyses of Milton's poetry and prose, working from ideas that arose in your reading and in your thinking and discussing. More instructions will follow.

**Final Exam:** In short, there will be a final covering the entire semester's reading. Again, it will be an open-book exam – and of course it will be a killer.

**Quizzes:** There may be weekly quizzes on the reading – please don't make me have to do these – I'd much rather be confident that you have done the reading.

- A brief note about academic dishonesty: cooperation among all of you is encouraged, but submitting others' work as your own is plagiarism. And plagiarism is not tolerated. No exceptions or excuses. Plagiarism will result in an immediate failure for the course and a report filed with the Judicial Board.
- Finally, if you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disabilities Services, 581-6583, as soon as possible.

**Course Schedule**  
**(Changes will be announced in class)**

**Week 1 - Contexts**

8/22: Introductions

8/24: Context and background – the times of Milton and 17<sup>th</sup>-century England; read “To my Father” (“Ad Patrem”) pp. 223-227.

**Week 2 - Sonnets**

8/29: Sonnet 1 “O Nightingale”; Sonnet 7 “How Soon Hath Time”; Sonnet 9 “Lady that in the Prime”;

8/31: Sonnet 10 “To the Lady Margaret Ley”; Sonnet 13 “To Mr. H. Lawes”; Sonnet 18 “On the Massacre in Piedmont”

**Week 3**

9/5: Sonnet 19 “When I Consider How My Light is Spent”; Sonnet 23 “Methought I Saw”; Sonnet 21 “To Mr. Cyriack Skinner”

9/7: Sonnet 16 “To the Lord General Cromwell”; Sonnet 17 “To Sir Henry Vane the Younger”; **Commentary 1 assigned**

**Week 4 - Longer Poems**

9/12: “L’ Allegro” and “Il Penseroso”

9/14: continued discussion; **Commentary 1 due**

**Week 5**

9/19: “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity” (“Nativity Ode”)

9/21: “A Maske” (“Comus”)

**Week 6**

9/26: “Lycidas”

9/28: continued discussion

**Week 7 - Selected Prose**

10/3: *Of Education*

10/5: *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (pp. 926-942 & 950-955); **Essay #1 due;**  
**Commentary 2 assigned**

**Week 8**

10/10: *Areopagitica*

10/12: continued discussion; **Commentary 2 due**

**Week 9 - *Paradise Lost***

10/17 & 19: Books 1 & 2 – (read also from *The King James Bible: Genesis i-iii*)

**Week 10**

10/24 & 26: Books 3 & 4

**Week 11**

10/31: Books 5 & 6

11/2: Books 7 & 8; **Commentary 3 assigned**

**Week 12**

11/7 & 9: Book 9; **Commentary 3 due**

**Week 13**

11/14 & 16: Book 10

Thanksgiving Break - 11/20 to 11/24

**Week 14**

11/28 & 30: Books 11 & 12

**Week 15 - *Samson Agonistes***

12/5: the whole thing – (read also from *The King James Bible: Judges* xiii-xvi)

12/7: continued discussion; **Essay #2 due**

**Final: Wednesday, December 13, 8:00-10:00 am.**